

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 IO-13 SAL-01 UPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 GAC-01 T-03 OMB-01 EUR-25 RSR-01

(ADP) W

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R 120420 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8512

INFO USDEL FRANCE

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E. O. 11652 N/ A

TAGS PINS, PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: PRESS VISIT TO AN ESTIMATED VC/ NVA REGIMENTAL BASE AREA

REF: CAN TO 0029 DATED MARCH 11 SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY SAIGON
IS REPEATED HERE FOR YOUR ACTION/ INFO:

QUOTE

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REF: CAN THO 0021

1. DAVID GREENWAY OF THE WASHINGTON POST AND FRANCES FITZ-
GERALD OF THE NEW YORKER RETURNED UNSCATHED TO CAN THO ON
MARCH 9 FROM A VISIT TO WHAT WE ESTIMATE TO BE A VC/ NVA
REGIMENTAL BASE AREA IN SOUTHERN CHUONG THIEN.

2. THE JOURNALISTS AND THEIR WASHINGTON POST INTERPRETER
THIEN SUCCEEDED WITHOUT ANY DIFFICULTY IN MAKING CONTACT
MARCH 8 WITH VC/ NVA OFFICERS NEAR TRUONG NGHIA
HAMLET, LONG BIEN VILLAGE, IN LONG MY DISTRICT. THEIR VISIT HAD
NOT BEEN PREARRANGED AND THE CHOICE OF SITES WAS RANDOM.
DURING THE EVENING THE JOURNALISTS WERE TAKEN TO A
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WELL OUTFITTED AND NEAT REGIMENTAL BASE WHERE THEY MET WITH SEVERAL VC/ NVA SENIOR OFFICERS . THE SPOKESMAN AND REGIMENTAL COMMANDER, QTE BROTHER BA UNQTE, TALKED WITH FITZGERALD, GREENWAY AND THEIR INTERPRETER, THIEN, UNTIL 2:00 A. M. THIEN REPORTS BA IS OF MEKONG DELTA ORIGIN. DURING THE CONVERSATION, BA EMPHASIZED THE PRG INTENTION TO ABIDE BY THE CEASEFIRE BUT TO STOUTLY RESIST RVNAF ENCROACHMENTS. THE EVENTUAL PRG GOAL REMAINS REUNIFICATION. HE JUSTIFIED THE PRESENCE OF NVA SOLDIERS IN SOUTH VIETNAM ON THE BASIS THEY TOO WERE VIETNAMESE. BA SAID THEY PRG HOPES FOR AN EFFECTIVE ICCS AND BELIEVES CONTINUED CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IS VITAL. BA CLAIMED THE PRG WON A GREAT VICTORY IN PARIS BUT TO PROTECT ITSELF PLANS TO RETAIN ITS MILITARY CAPABILITY. HE GAVE NO INDICATION OF RECOGNIZING EITHER JOURNALIST OR THIER PAPERS.

3. BOTH JOURNALISTS NOTED THE MEETING ROOM WAS DECORATED ONLY WITH A PICTURE OF HO CHI MINH AND A BANNER WHICH READ QTE LONG LIVE THE WORKERS PARTY UNQTE. NEVER ONCE DURING THE INTERVIEW DID BA REFER TO THE NLF OR PRP.

4. THE SPECIAL BRANCH IN LONG MY DISTRICT PICKED UP GREENWAY AND FITZGERALD WITHOUT THIEN THE MORNING OF MARCH 9 AFTER THEY HAD LEFT THE VC/ NVA CAMP. THEY WERE TAKEN TO CAN THO WHERE THEY WERE CLOSELY QUESTIONED, DELAYED SEARCHED, AND FINALLY RELEASED. THEY WERE REQUIRED TO TURN OVER THEIR FILM. FITZGERALD EXPOSED HER FILM BEFORE GIVING IT TO THE POLICE. THIEN RETURNED TO CAN THO BY SEPARATE BUS AND WAS NOT APPREHENDED.

5. DURING THEIR STAY MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE AREA WAS BRISK. ARTILLERY AND AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE FILLED THE NIGHT AND THE TRIO OBSERVED AIR STRIKES AND HELICOPTER ATTACKS NEAR THE MAIN ROAD DURING THE MORNING OF MARCH 9.

6. COMMENT: THE TRIO COULD NOT HAVE CHOSEN A MORE DANGEROUS AREA AND ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE EMERGED UNSCATHED. GVN REACTION TO THEIR VISIT TO DATE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY MILD BUT WE UNDERSTAND GENERAL NGHI WAS FURIOUS. FITZGERALD GREENWAY, AND THIEN MAY HAVE FURTHER PROBLEMS HERE, OR IN SAIGON, ONCE THE STORY IS FILED. BROTHER BA' S REMARKS
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WERE NOT ORIGINAL, HAD HIS REMARKS BEEN MADE BY AN NLF
POLITICIAN, THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN MORE NUANCED.

7. AIRGRAM FOLLOWS.
BARNES UNQUOTE
BUNKER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON03963
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730324/aaaahjwt.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05-Dec-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <28-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971117
Subject: PRESS VISIT TO AN ESTIMATED VC/ NVA REGIMENTAL BASE AREA
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT
To: EA
FRANCE
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005